10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
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can live in the village and cultivate a garden. The maintenance of contacts is facilitated by the fairly general cessation of work on the farms at the week-ends. Apart from two periods of tobacco slump, the local demand for labour has exceeded the supply ever since the earlier period of European settlement. As early as January 1900 the manager of the North Charterland Exploration Company complained to the Administration that the lack of local labour was very serious, and attributed this to the large number of people who were going away to work in Southern Rhodesia. This theme has been repeated over and over again ever since. The practical effect of this chronic local shortage of labour has been that work on the farms has always been a more easy-going affair than work away on the mines or in the big towns. Men have been able to absent themselves from work to attend to their affairs at home very much as they have pleased. Payment has been either for piece-work or for the number of days worked, so that at one time it was not unusual for a man to take two or three months to complete thirty days' work, for which he had contracted.

Prior to about 1930, there were a few villages located on farm-land, whose inhabitants undertook to work for so many days, with pay, in return for permission to remain on the land. With the completion of the move into reserves, this became rare, and at the present time the bulk of the people who live on farm-land are accommodated in compounds provided for them by the farmer. These people are the labourers on the farm for the time being, their families, and friends. The compound is under the charge of a foreman who is usually an employee of long standing on the farm. On some of the farms there are small gardens, but none of them, as far as I know, permit the keeping of cattle by the labourers. This means that a man with cattle must continue to keep them at home in his village or in the village of a relative. Cattle are still the principal form of investment, particularly for people who cannot spend their capital in building a brick house, so that it is common to find in a village that many of the cattle in the byre are being tended for the benefit of an absent owner who spends the majority of his time away on a farm and who may not even have a hut in the village.

The demand for labour on the tobacco farms varies considerably with the time of year, being greatest from about Christmas until about June. At the same time, the calls on a man to tend his own garden are greatest from about November until May. Farmers therefore try to get labour for a few days at a time from people who live in villages

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524 after moving other beans out of a hole. A boys' game played in the wet season is played with egg-shaped pieces of mud, with a small flange at one end. These pieces are thrown down on to the water, and ought to make an explosive noise.

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243 [221] Maize, the main crop, is planted with the first steady rains in November, and is harvested soon after the end of the rains in April or May. Under the influence of the Agricultural Department of the [243] Government, planting in small ridges following the contour is increasingly practised, but prior to the introduction of this and other new agricultural methods in the 1930s, planting was carried out in mounds about three feet in diameter and eighteen inches high. Finger millet is grown on patches of soil on which branches and garden 241 trash have been burnt. However, the citemene system, as known in other parts of the country, in which trees are felled over a wide area and burnt to fertilise a small area in the middle, is not practised as a principal method here. Finger millet is the only crop to be planted solely in ash fertilised patches, while the rest of the cleared ground may be planted with beans and nuts, and in the following season, with maize. Gardens last from two up to twenty or more years, depending on the type of soil, and the selection of a garden site is determined to some extent by the nature of the soil and of the vegetation growing on it.

• 244 In seepage areas, dry season gardens can be cultivated, and it is in such gardens, fenced in to keep out straying animals, that vegetables are grown for sale to Europeans and in the villages. These sites are also used for early planted maize, which is harvested in January and eaten in the form of green mealies. In the villages [249] themselves, small plots of tobacco and castor oil are grown on old hut sites, while abandoned village sites are used as subsidiary gardens for maize and other crops. Mango, banana, and pawpaw trees are 245 found in villages and on the sites of abandoned villages.